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ABSTRACT

In 1985, the Commission on Instruction of the California Association of Community Colleges undertook a project to examine problems in articulation between the community colleges and the University of California (UC) and the California State Universities (CSU). As part of the project, a statewide survey was conducted to examine the nature, extent, and frequency of articulation and the characteristics of successful articulation arrangements. Responses from 103 of the 106 colleges surveyed revealed that 30% of the colleges reported positive experiences with articulation and 70% expressed dissatisfaction with certain aspects of the process. The major characteristics of successful articulation were course-by-course equivalency agreements, direct and ongoing communication, and the establishment of articulation as an institutional priority. Another component of the project was a meeting between UC, CSU, and community college representives to reach consensus on solutions to the problems identified by the survey. During the meeting, a number of major issues and concerns were identified, including the need to preserve diversity and flexibility among all three segments of public higher education, the need for improved communication, the importance of adequate planning time to implement new requirements, and the need for clarification of CSU and UC breadth requirements. Recommendations for addressing these and other issues are included. (AJL)

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Focusing On Articulation:

Improving The Community College Transfer Rate

CACC

Commission On Instruction

Subcommittee On Articulation Concerns

Barbara F. Mertes
Senior Author

California Association of Community Colleges

JC 880 588

THE CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES is an institution-based, nonprofit, voluntary state association organized for the purposes of representing the interests of the community and junior colleges of California. The Association supports California's local community colleges in the pursuit of their goals and promotes community college education by providing leadership and service. It fulfills its mission by: (a) developing policy recommendations, supported by appropriate research, on issues of importance to community colleges at the local, state, and national levels, (b) advocating to governmental bodies the policies determined to be in the best interests of community college education, (c) assisting member institutions in developing and promoting solutions to problems of local concern, (d) facilitating the efforts of institutions, segments, organizations and agencies to work and speak cooperatively on behalf of the California community colleges, (e) informing members of the community college community and the general public of current issues and research in community college education, and (f) developing human and financial resources to aid the member institutions and the Association to enhance community college education.

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FOCUSING ON ARTICULATION: IMPROVING THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE TRANSFER RATE

California Association of Community Colleges

Commission On Instruction

Subcommittee On Articulation Concerns

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CACC PRESS
SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA

PREFACE

This paper is the second in a series published by CACC Press. It reports the findings of the Subcommittee on Articulation Concerns of the Commission on Instruction of the California Association of Community Colleges (CACC) established to research apparent problems in the articulation process related to the successful transfer of students from California's community colleges to University of California (UC) and California State University (CSU) campuses. Specifically, the Subcommittee was charged by the Commission to:

- Determine if any credibility existed in community college allegations regarding transfer difficulties experienced by students.
- Identify the nature, extent, and frequency of discovered articulation problems.
- Review its findings with representatives from the University of California and the California State University in order to develop cooperative efforts to improve the process of transition for community college students.

In pursuing its charge, the Subcommittee conducted a survey of all California community colleges. Of the 106 institutions which were contacted, 103 (97%) responded. This unusually high response to a survey underscores the importance of the addressed topic and the intense interest of the respondents in resolving perceived problems.

During the Subcommittee's review, it became apparent that successful articulation processes share common characteristics. Major among these are:

1. Course-by-course equivalency agreements between the sending and receiving institutions.
2. Continuing, direct, face-to-face communications among administrators, faculty, and staff of the institutions involved.
3. Establishment of transfer articulation as an institutional priority, supported by appropriate staff and other resource allocations.

At the same time, even those institutions which reported participating in highly successful and effective articulation efforts also reported "the articulation process had become increasingly complicated and their articulation officers were finding their tasks overwhelmingly difficult."

In reporting its findings, the Subcommittee has separately identified the characteristics of successful articulation processes and exemplary four-year institution articulation models, major issues and concerns with the articulation process as it currently operates in many instances, a number of recommendations for general improvement of the process, and several policy implications resulting from the review. These are reported on the following pages.

What emerges most clearly from the results of the Subcommittee's work is the absolute necessity of local-level field-based participation in the establishment and maintenance of successful and effective articulation of student transfer. To be effective, and thus successful, the articulation process must be supported by ongoing face-to-face communications between the representatives of the institutions involved, and must be further supported by accessible and consistent information regarding transfer requirements and course equivalencies. This, in turn, requires that the institutions place a high priority on their articulation processes and provide the staff and other resources necessary to do the job that needs to be done.

The report of the Subcommittee, FOCUSING ON ARTICULATION: IMPROVING THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE TRANSFER RATE, was approved by the Commission on Instruction on May 17, 1985. It was adopted as an official paper of the Association on May 24, 1985, at a meeting of the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors.

The members of the Subcommittee on Articulation Concerns are: Barbara F. Mertes, Dean, Chabot College - Valley Campus (Chairperson and Senior Author); Douglas W. Burris, Vice Chancellor, Los Rios Community College District; Peter M. Hirsch, Associate Executive Director, California Association of Community Colleges; Ernest Matlock, Assistant Superintendent and Vice President of Instruction, Butte College; Erna Noble, Instructor, Chaffey College; Carol Rookstool, Dean of Instruction, The Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising; and Rebecca Welch, Coordinator of the Humanities Center, Irvine Valley College.

Special acknowledgement goes to the Los Rios Community College District which provided assistance in the development of this paper.

Peter M. Hirsch
Sacramento, California
June, 1985

I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the California public higher education segments have intensified their efforts to improve the academic quality of instructional and student services programs. All segments of higher education, either through the dictates of legislative mandates or through the results of self-initiated studies, have begun major education reforms which address the need for increased academic rigor in course content, for higher standards in student achievement, and for greater institutional accountability as it relates to student performance. Coupled with these activities is the tremendous interest in the number and quality of students transferring from community colleges to public four-year institutions.

Community college institutional reform does not operate in a vacuum. The revisions in General Education Breadth requirements, the changes in admission policies, the re-defintion of baccalaureate-level courses, the interpretation of remedial studies and ESL, the application of academic rigor, and the reappraisal of credit-bearing courses by the University of California, the California State University, and the community colleges themselves, have all affected the quality and number of students transferring from community colleges to four-year institutions. This is not to say that these reforms are not good; they are, and in most cases, long over-due. What is suggested is that the topic of student transfer is an infinitely complicated and complex issue which cannot be isolated from those other forces affecting four-year as well as two-year college students.

The question of the community college transfer student is directly related to the study of the California Master Plan for Higher Education, and more specifically, to the mission of California's community colleges. Additionally, the 1985 California Postsecondary Education Commission's report, "Reaffirming California's Commitment To Transfer," clearly identifies shared responsibility among the three California public segments of higher education for providing a successful transfer program.

If this responsibility is to be equally shared, then what are the first steps we must take toward improving the current transfer program to make it more workable and thus better for students? One can begin by examining the current provisions established through articulation agreements.

II. ARTICULATION PROVISIONS

The transfer of students from the community colleges to public four-year colleges and universities is guided through the use of articulation agreements between and among these institutions.

In the case of the California State University system (CSU), these articulation agreements are defined in Executive Orders empowered through Title V; they are, also, published in state university and community college catalogs. The major articulation Executive Orders dealing with community college students transferring to the CSU system are EO 342 (General Education Breadth requirements); EO 167 (the certification of baccalaureate-level credit for a course offered at an institution other than CSU); EO 405 (graduation requirements in United States His-

tory, Constitution, and American Ideals); and EO 319 (impacted transfer curriculum - major areas).

The University of California (UC) has general admission standards covering requirements in English, mathematics, and foreign language; these are usually referred to as the A—F requirements. In addition, the University has designated selected courses to meet breadth requirements for the completion of lower division study.

Both UC and CSU also require that students meet lower division course requirements in their major areas of study before these students can be advanced to upper-division status.

III. 1985 COMMUNITY COLLEGE SURVEY

During the past few years, California community college representatives noted that their students were experiencing increased difficulty in realizing a smooth transition from the community colleges to the public four-year institutions. Among the complaints registered against the public four-year institutions were that these colleges were not following articulation agreements as established through university-wide agreements and as published in college catalogs.

So widespread and persistent were these complaints that the Commission on Instruction of the California Association of Community Colleges, under the direction of its chairman Dr. Richard Sneed, established a Subcommittee on Articulation Concerns with the following charge:

- The Subcommittee was to determine if any credibility existed in the Community Colleges' allegations.
- If the Subcommittee did find substantial evidence for these allegations, then the Subcommittee was to identify the nature, extent, and frequency of violations of the articulation process by public four-year institutions.
- After completing its investigation, the Subcommittee was to arrange a meeting with UC and CSU representatives, respectively, in order to review the Subcommittee's work before the publication of its report. In this way, all three segments of higher education would be able to participate in a cooperative effort toward improving the transition of community college students to four-year public institutions.

In order to gather the necessary information, the Subcommittee surveyed all California Community Colleges.

On January 10, 1985, each California Community College Chief Executive Officer assigned to a campus was mailed a letter of inquiry and a survey form. The letter asked that the campus' Dean of Instruction and Articulation Officer independently respond to the survey.

One-hundred-six (106) letters of inquiry accompanied by two survey forms were mailed. The Subcommittee received responses from 103 colleges (97%).

The Subcommittee designed the survey instrument to allow individual community colleges to record perceptions relating to experiences with the articulation processes between their college and the public four-year institutions to which their students transfer.

The survey form was formatted to give community college respondents the opportunity to respond favorably about articulation processes which were working well. If the respondents were perceiving difficulty with articulation processes, the form also provided opportunity to identify major concerns.

The gathered data, then, are not statistical in nature. Rather, these data reflect the community college respondents' perceptions of the articulation process between their institutions and the public four-year institutions.

In reviewing the responses from the 103 California community colleges, the Subcommittee found that respondents from 30% of the colleges reported positive articulation process experiences. Respondents from seventy percent (70%) of the colleges were not satisfied with certain aspects of the articulation process.

IV. SUCCESSFUL ARTICULATION PROCESSES

The Subcommittee reviewed the "working well" responses to determine if a pattern had developed among those colleges experiencing "no problem" with the articulation process. Those community colleges which responded favorably on the survey identified the following characteristics of successful articulation processes:

- The community colleges had established an internal computerized course-by-course agreement with the public four-year institutions to which the majority of their students transfer.
- The articulation officers within the community colleges had a continuing and direct relationship with their counterparts in the four-year institutions.
- Many of the community colleges were participating members in informal groups consisting of representatives from neighboring UC and CSU institutions.
- A few of the community colleges were using the California Articulation Number System (CAN) and found this system useful for articulation purposes. (SB 851, 1983)
- All community colleges which responded positively stated that their articulation officers worked "very hard" to make their articulation system effective.
- All community colleges which responded positively stated that the articulation process had become increasing complicated and that their articulation officers were finding their tasks overwhelmingly difficult.

The Subcommittee also found that three four-year institutions are recognized for outstanding work in the articulation process.

V. EXEMPLARY FOUR-YEAR COLLEGE ARTICULATION MODELS

The California community colleges' respondents consistently identified three four-year institutions as having exemplary articulation models: California State University at Sacramento, University of California at Davis, and University of California at Santa Barbara. These institutions were singled-out as having the best articulation arrangements with community colleges because, according to the respondents:

- The three institutions make every attempt to work directly with community colleges in solving transfer student difficulties before these become major issues of concern for students.
- The Chief Executive Officer of each institution has placed a high priority on providing an excellent articulation center.
- The Articulation Officers working in these institutions are knowledgeable, efficient, and student-centered.

- The three institutions evidence a sincere interest in the transfer student population and attempt to accommodate a smooth transition for these students.
- All three institutions have established exemplary articulation models with their community college feeder districts; however, their services to transfer students are recognized statewide.

VI. MAJOR ISSUES AND CONCERNS WITH THE ARTICULATION PROCESS

The Subcommittee reviewed the "having difficulty" responses to determine if a pattern of repeated issues and/or concerns had developed. The Subcommittee found that many of the same difficulties were being experienced by numbers of the community colleges—often with the same public four-year institutions. Indeed, there was a consensus among community colleges which focused on "universal" problems.

After reviewing the survey responses, the Subcommittee arranged a meeting with representatives from the University of California and the California State University systems, respectively, in order to begin to arrive at a consensus for solving articulation-related problems. The focus of the two meetings was directed toward working through solutions to the articulation problems identified in the survey.

On the morning of May 2, 1985, CSU representatives from Chancellor Reynolds' office met with representatives from the Subcommittee; UC representatives from President Gardner's office met with the Subcommittee's representatives on the afternoon of May 2, 1985.

The representatives of the Subcommittee on Articulation Concerns, in conjuction with the representatives from both the University of California and the California State University, identified common concerns and issues to which they would work toward improving. All agreed that a cooperative effort among and between institutions could be reached without legislative intervention. However, all also agreed that many of these **improvements would not occur unless additional funding were dedicated specifically toward enhancing the articulation process.**

Based on the results of the Subcommittee's survey of California's community colleges, the representatives from UC, CSU and the community colleges identified the following major issues and concerns related to the articulation process:

- The need to preserve diversity and flexibility among and within all three segments of public higher education.
- The need for four-year institutions to improve communication lines among and between their own institutions and the community colleges.
- The need for four-year institutions to provide community colleges more adequate planning time in order to implement four-year institutions' new requirements and major course changes.
- The need for the California State University system to clarify the existing provisions of all standing Executive Orders, and most especially those provided in EO 167.
- The need for the California State University system to provide clarification for the interpretation of General Education Breadth requirements as these are presented through the 19 CSU campuses.
- The need for the University of California to clarify the interpretation of Breadth requirements as these are presented through the 9 UC campuses.

- The need to establish articulation as a priority function in all three segmemts of public higher education.
- The need to secure well-trained, knowledgeable persons—on a full-time basis—in all three segments of public higher education, in order to carry out the articulation process.
- The need to establish adequate, institutionally-based research resources for follow-up of the educational progress of transfer students at upper division levels.
- The need to provide improved intra-campus communication lines within all three segments of public higher education.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Student Accessiblity To Diverse Institutions

Representatives from all three segments of California public higher education place the **preservation of diversity and flexibility** among their institutions as a major priority; however, to insure student accessiblity to four-year institutions, the representatives recommend the **establishment of an automated process** which provides **for a course-by-course equivalency** (in lieu of accounting). As one representative stated, "Articulation demands have progressed us far beyond the pencil-paper approach we are currently using. Standardization of courses is not the answer; adaptability to diversity is the most reasonable approach."

Communication among and between institutions can be improved by creating an automated system. Materials can be up-dated immediately, and colleges can be alerted to these changes before they are implemented.

2. Local Discussion Of Articulation Concerns

Establish through an informal **process** and on an "on-need basis", an opportunity for representatives from community colleges, UC, and CSU institutions, located in close proximity to one another, **to meet** in order **to discuss common articulation concerns.** It was the consensus of the UC, CSU, and community college representatives that the most effective communication in solving articulation concerns occurs at the "local level". There was no need to create a "super body" bureaucracy to handle articulation concerns.

3. Reasonable Time Lines For Implementing Changes

Several community colleges alleged that drastic changes were made in the requirements of basic transfer courses, i.e., English 1A, and that these changes occurred without benefit of consultation or without the establishment of a reasonable timeline so that community colleges could make similar adjustments in their own course offerings.

Representatives from UC and CSU concurred with the comments made by the community colleges, and both systems have placed their proposed changes under study before implementation.

The UC and CSU representatives assured the community college representatives that **adequate time** will be **given to the consideration of changes** occurring in Reading and Composition requirements, and in the interpretation of the English 1A requirements affecting CSU transfer students.

4. **Review And Reporting Of CSU Executive Orders**

Representatives from the **CSU system assured** community college representatives that they will publish **a status up-date of all Executive Orders** related to articulation with community colleges and assured further, that no changes have occured in Executive Order 167 since its implementation in 1973. A CSU study committee was established in October 1981, for the purpose of reviewing the provisions of Executive Order 167, but no new recommendations have been forwarded by the study group at this time.

Executive Order 405 (Graduation Requirements in United States History, Constitution and American Ideals) was distributed early in 1983; however, the issue of "double counting" was not addressed in the 1983 version of Executive Order 405. (Title V-40404)

5. **Publication Of Differences In Breadth Requirements**

California State University representatives recognize that **there is diversity of interpretation of General Education Breadth requirements among the 19 CSU campuses.** Community college respondents do not disagree with the 19 CSU campuses' right to interpret Executive Orders 338 and 342 as these apply to individual campuses; however, community colleges would hope that these campuses would provide for course-equivalency (in lieu of interpretation) for community college transfer students.

Community college respondents would appreciate widespread and up-to-date publication of these General Education Breadth requirements as they differ among the 19 CSU campuses. In addition, **the standardization of a publication format** would be a great asset in interpreting the materials disseminated by four-year institutions.

University of California representatives recognize that selected institutions within the UC system have interpreted the Breadth requirements differently. As with the CSU system, community college respondents would appreciate **course-equivalency information** as well as **widespread publication of** these **Breadth requirements as they differ among the 9 UC campuses.**

6. **Increased Institutional Priority For Articulation**

All three segments of higher education need to re-examine their institutional priorities as these priorities relate to the support of the articulation process. Frequently, articulation is carried as one of several functions in a single office. Often, there exists little or no regard for adequate institutional funding of this complicated process.

Community colleges which have placed a high priority on the development of an articulation model are Diablo Valley College and Los Angeles Harbor College. Diablo Valley College has developed a totally automated system which insures student success in the transfer process. Los Angeles Harbor College, in conjunction with the University of California at Irvine (UCI/Assist) and with funding from the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, has created another successful articulation program. In addition, both the University of California at Berkeley and at Los Angeles have pioneered experimental cooperative admissions programs with neighboring community colleges.

7. **Local Accountability For Articulation**

Personnel in articulation offices tend to carry additional responsibilities not related to the articulation process. **Consideration should be given to appointing one or two full-time persons at each institution who are knowledgeable, well-trained, and accountable**

for the successful working of the articulation process. In this way, a statewide network can be established consisting of identifiable articulation officers who operate at a local level and who are responsible for the articulation process at each institution.

The NEWS, the statewide community college newspaper of the California Association of Community Colleges, has agreed to publish this list of articulation officers and will regularly provide up-dates and/or changes information about articulation agreements. In this way, the University of California and California State University systems will have access to a large community college population who can be consistently apprised of articulation concerns.

8. **Improved Institutional Research**

Institutional research at the community college level needs to improve. With the exception of a few follow-up studies, such as the major one occurring in the Los Rios Community College District, community colleges have not done the job needed to follow their transfer student population.

9. **Improved Intra-Campus Communications**

All three segments agreed that intra-campus communications need improvement. This call for improvement in communications was noted by both community college and four-year public institution representatives, and includes:

- The need for community college **faculties and counseling staff to establish clear communication lines** in defining the articulation process as it affects transfer students enrolled in technical-occupational programs as well as in Letters and Science majors.
- The need for community college **faculties serving as representatives** to statewide advisory groups and organizations **to understand better the complexities** of the articulation process.
- The need for community college **instructional officers to work more closely with** community college **articulation officers** in establishing an accountable campuswide articulation process.
- The need for university-based **department heads to communicate "major" course changes to** their own university **articulation officers** before contacting community college department heads.

VIII. CONCLUSION

The major focus of the investigation of the Subcommittee on Articulation Concerns of the Commission on Instruction of the California Association of Community Colleges was directed toward improving the articulation process for community college students planning to transfer to a public four-year institution. In conducting this investigation, the following policy implications emerged:

1. **Broad field participation** was the significant element for gaining pertinent information as it affected students transferring from community colleges to four-year public institutions.

2. The importance of establishing **accountability for the success of the articulation process at the campus level** was emphasized. There was little evidence to support the assigning of this accountability to a centralized body.

3. The **continuance of a decentralized system which enhances diversity** among and between segments of higher education is the most effective approach to maintaining educational options for students.

4. The **opportunity to discuss** the outcomes of the California Association of Community College's survey with representatives from the University of California and California State University systems reinforced the importance of **the common concern** shared among all three segments of higher education. In addition, representatives from the three segments were able to clarify and correct misinterpretations and misconceptions of the articulation process **and to establish cooperative efforts** toward workable solutions to current articulation problems.

5. As **computerized systems** for managing articulation arrangements are developed and implemented, the most effective uses of these systems occur when they are utilized **in campus-to-campus relationships.**

6. Certain community colleges—Diablo Valley College and Los Angeles Harbor College—and certain four-year institutions—California State University at Sacramento, University of California at Davis, at Irvine, and at Santa Barbara—have **already established excellent articulation models.** It is suggested that these models **be studied for possible replication** among other California institutions of higher learning.

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